

“Bee” Nice to This Flying Insect and Reap the Rewards for Life



[Image via Pixabay](#)

Bees are not simply a metaphorical tool for teaching youngsters about the joys of reproduction. Instead, bees are a vital, if not somewhat feared and misunderstood, aspect of a global economy. These winged creatures are paramount to the longevity of at least [30% of the crops](#) we rely on for food each year. Without bees, there would be no almonds, apples, or pumpkins, and much of the crops used to feed livestock would cease to be. It is up to us to take steps to ensure bees' ultimate survival.

Bees and the economy

[\\$15 billion](#). That's the dollar amount of food that bees pollinate in the US alone. Bees contribute to approximately 35% of the entire world's food stores, including 87 of the top 115 crops. Beekeepers account for more than \$140 million in commerce transactions each year. Cotton crops, which are dependent upon bee pollination, are valued at an average of \$5.97 billion annually. You can read more about the impact of honeybees in the United States' economy in [this](#) white paper published in 2015 by James Chisel at the University of Puget Sound.

Bees and the ecosystem

Without bees, many native plant species would die out, leading to a food shortage for the animals that rely on them. This would trigger a [trickle effect](#) of starvation that would result in a global struggle to sustain the Earth's current population. Food shortages would surely lead to countless deaths, particularly among the most vulnerable. And since, as [The Washington Post](#) points out, food scarcity is a major contributor to conflicts, the continued existence of bees may actually help prevent hostilities between nations.

Bees and medicine

The US National Library of Medicine and National Institutes for Health calls honey “[one of the finest products of nature that has a wide range of beneficial uses](#).” Honey has been used since the dawn of mankind to treat everything from obesity and constipation to tuberculosis and mental health issues. Honey, which has natural anti-septic properties, is used today in many areas to treat open wounds and infections. There is mounting evidence that suggests honey may be useful in the treatment of certain kinds of [cancer](#).

How you can help

As previously mentioned, the future of the honeybee depends on the actions of man today. You can start by avoiding the use of synthetic pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides, which may damage the habitats and foraging domains of local [bee](#) populations. Bees need food, water, and shelter to survive; all things you can provide right in your own backyard. Leave a spot on your lawn with exposed soil for the 70% of the species that nest underground. Small birdbaths and brush piles will also stimulate the bee population.

Gardeners can do even more by “thinking like a bee” in their landscaping design. There are a number of plants, including the California poppy, lavender, sunflower, and wildlife, that are easy to grow and even easier for bees to access. Plant your garden in drifts and swatches, with at least a three- to four-foot square plot of a single species in one area. Gather bee-friendly plants in a single location and keep in mind that bees have excellent color vision. Bees' vision is shifted toward blue, purple, white, violet, and yellow flora, so consider including a breadth of these hues in your plant selection. For more information, [Redfin.com](#) offers some good tips on the basics of gardening.

While you may not single-handedly be able to save the entire world's population of bees, even one small habitat per community will go a long way towards bolstering the future growth of this vital species.